

June 17, 1997

Duxbury

Town aims to improve its power backup

By John Chaffee
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — Selectmen agreed last night that a gap in the town's power lines must be closed, but disagreed on how to go about it.

The two main Commonwealth Electric feeder lines that provide power to various parts of town are not connected, which makes it difficult for the utility to restore service throughout town after major storms.

"It's a public safety issue. We've got to make that connection," Selectman Friend Weiler said.

The gap in the two lines begins across from the main entrance to Mayflower Cemetery and extends nearly 450 yards up Tremont Street (Route 3A) to the intersection with Depot Street across from Town Hall.

Three years ago, Commonwealth Electric officials outlined five alternative ways to make the connection — three by overhead lines that would be paid for by the utility, and two by burying the lines at town expense.

At that time, the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society objected to the prospect of overhead lines being strung from poles erected along Lanham Woods, the society-owned property across from the cemetery.

Due to a lack of public demand for the connection, the selectmen dropped the issue.

"We considered it a dead issue," said selectmen Chairman Margaret Kearney.

But last night, because residents reacted angrily after the April Fool's Day storm knocked out power for up to four days in some parts of town, the selectmen tried again.

"I think the decision we made three years ago was a lousy decision," Weiler said.

Commonwealth Electric officials offered the same five options:

- Extend the existing line from where it ends across from the cemetery entrance to across the Tremont Street-Depot Street intersection by installing 10-12 poles, including one in the center of Boomer Square, a small triangle of land at the intersection.

- The same, except instead of using push-braces to support the poles, string supporting guy wires to poles on the cemetery side of Tremont Street.

- Run the line on poles up Tremont Street to just before the intersection, then bury the cable in a 600-foot trench that will cost the town an estimated \$150,000.

- Same as the first, except instead of a pole in the middle of Boomer Square, string the line from poles placed very near the side of the street on either side of the intersection.

- Bury the line the whole way, about 1,300 feet at an estimated cost of \$250,000.

"We want to do what's best for the town of Duxbury," said Michael O'Malley, a Commonwealth Electric marketing specialist.

John Joline, chairman of the rural and historical society's lands committee, said the aesthetics of the area should be preserved by putting the connecting line underground.

Margaret Malone, speaking for residents of the Meetinghouse, James and Prior Farm Roads neighborhood, said, "We're all interested in the aesthetic quality of the town, but we need to find ways of lessening the impact and duration of power outages."

She presented a petition signed by 38 area residents calling upon selectmen to close the power line gap.

Although Weiler and Selectman Andre Martecchini agreed that burying cable under the intersection was probably the best solution, Kearney said she was opposed to spending public funds to make the connection.

However, all three agreed a solution should be proposed to a special town meeting this fall.

Town Manager Rocco Longo agreed to schedule a site visit for the selectmen, Commonwealth Electric officials, representatives of the rural and historical society and residents.